

Mantoux Tuberculin Skin Test

1. What is the reason for taking the skin test?

The tuberculin skin test can show if a person has ever been "infected" by tuberculosis (TB) germs. These germs may be active and causing disease or latent (inactive). When the germ is latent the person feels fine and cannot spread the germ to others.

2. Who should be screened with the tuberculin skin test?

Screening is done to identify infected persons at high risk of developing TB disease who would benefit from preventive therapy and to identify persons with TB disease who need treatment. Screening is frequently recommended for staff members who may be exposed to TB on the job or who would pose a risk to large numbers of susceptible persons if they developed active TB. Such persons are tested pre-employment and periodically thereafter.

Groups to screen:

- Persons with or at risk for HIV infection
- Close contacts of persons with infectious TB
- Persons with certain medical conditions
- Persons who inject drugs
- Foreign-born persons from areas where TB is common
- Medically underserved, low income populations, including high risk racial and ethnic groups
- Residents of long term care facilities (nursing homes, correctional facilities)
- Health care workers, daycare providers and teachers
- Locally identified high-prevalence groups (migrant farm workers or homeless persons)

3. How is the Mantoux test given?

A small amount of a testing material (PPD) is placed just under the top layer of the skin on the inside of a person's forearm with a very small needle and syringe. The needle will only feel like a slight pinprick, it is not a shot. A new, disposable syringe with needle is used for each test. Two or three days later, a trained health worker must read the skin test reaction. At that time, the skin test reaction is measured and the results recorded. Only a trained health worker can determine if the reaction is negative or positive.

4. How should I care for the test spot?

- Avoid covering the spot with a band-aid if possible.

- Don't scratch the arm. If it itches, put a cold compress on it.
- Don't rub the area. Pat the arm dry after washing.
- ***Remember to return at the appointed time to have the test reaction read!!***

5. Should I be tested if I've been given a BCG vaccination?

The BCG Vaccine is not proven protection against TB. People who have had a BCG vaccine and have no record of ever having a Mantoux PPD test should be given the test if it is otherwise indicated.

6. May I be tested if I am pregnant?

Pregnancy is not generally considered a contraindication to testing. However, the woman may wish to consult her healthcare provider.

7. Are there any side effects from the Mantoux PPD skin test?

Side effects are uncommon from the Mantoux PPD skin test. However, a person who has been exposed to TB germs may occasionally have a sizable reaction, which may cause some swelling and discomfort. This swelling should disappear in about two weeks. Rarely, in highly sensitized persons, vesiculation (blistering) or ulceration may occur. This is usually treated with steroid ointments.

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